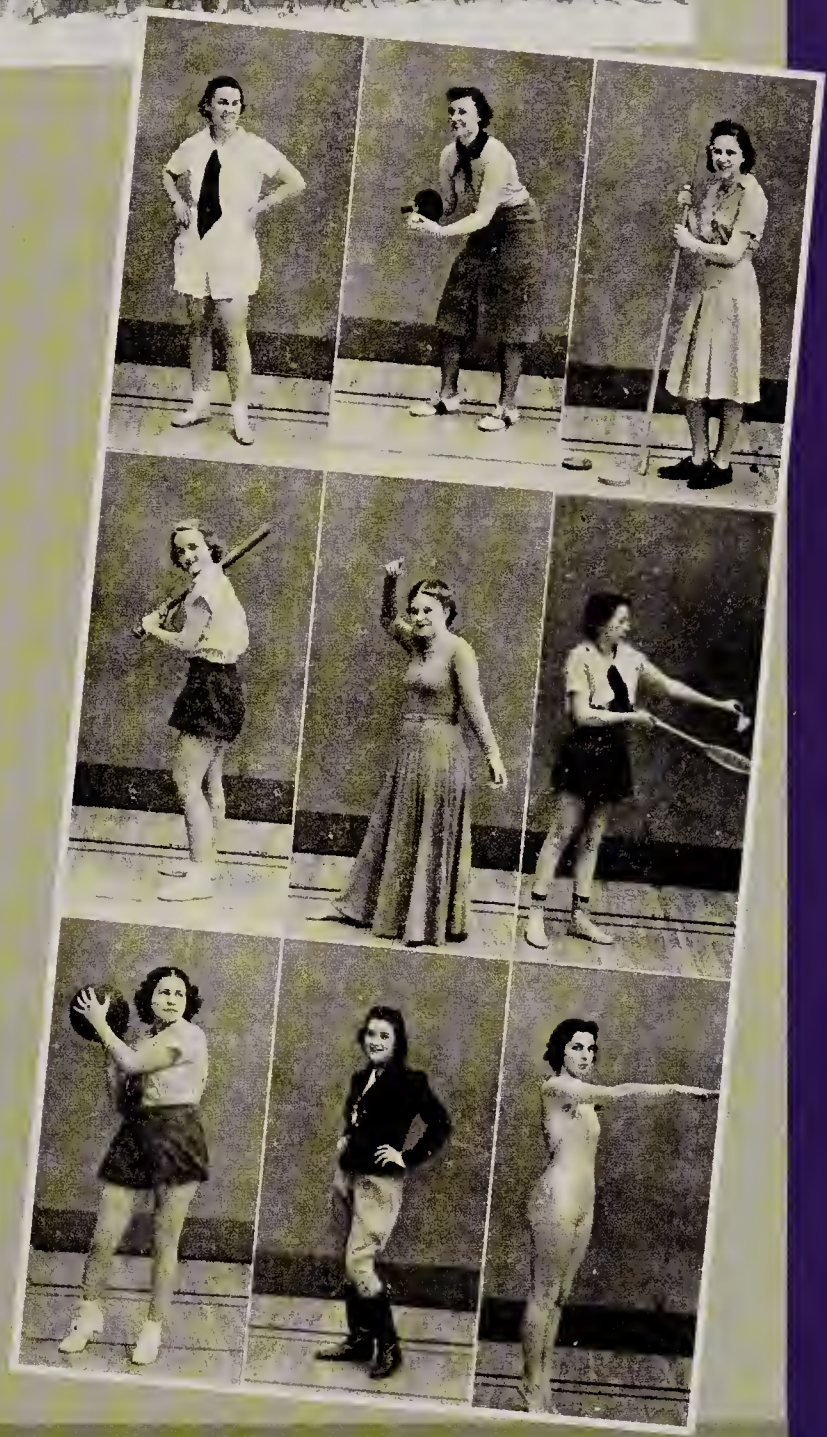
"Let's Join!"

The Women's Athletic Association at Joliet Junior College



It was long considered a guy's thing: Sports. The strict gender rules only allowed boys and men to sweat, bleed and scream while they careened down a court with a ball bouncing at their side, or smashed into one another while running for a touchdown, or even glided effortlessly through the water toward victory. But what we all forget sometimes is that not one part of that idea is true. From the beginning, school athletics were not just for the boys. Starting the early 20th century, high schools, then community colleges, had internal organizations which allowed females to have their own organization of sports teams, where they competed against themselves, locally and nationally.

At Joliet Junior College, the Women's Athletic Association (WAA) was born out of the Joliet Township High School's Girls' Athletic Association, which began between 1905 and 1910 at Joliet Township High School. This organization was made possible by the Illinois League of Girls' Athletic Associations. What started in the high school expanded at JJC. By 1933, the WAA had grown to 23 members, requiring all females enrolled at JJC to become part of the association. Sports like, basketball, swimming, riding, archery and tennis were all played by the women enrolled in the group. The WAA participated not only in intramural and state-wide competitions, but also hosted social gatherings at the College and organized non-competitive sporting activities, like hiking, roller skating, ballet and bicycling. The women prided themselves on their strong character and initiation rites of passages. One such initiation according to the JJC Yearbook, included walking through the hallways of what is now Joliet Central High School on stilts.

In 1958, the WAA had become a student club for women who "enjoyed sports and rhythmic activities." In 1959, the WAA gave way to the Women's Activity League, a group that continued the social activities of the WAA, but no longer organized any sport teams for women. It would not be until 1976 when the College would finally create a women's sports division within its athletics department.

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